

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1. Evolution of the Canon

To those who follow Joseph Smith's revelations as God's word, the original text is of paramount significance, just as they are to secular chroniclers. The original texts are not only the most authentic and uncontaminated, they also best represent the milieu of and open a window on human consciousness for that particular time and place. Yet so little thought is given today to the original texts because, in part, they are assumed to have been unchanged. They are considered sacrosanct--beyond scholarship. If church leaders made changes, they must have had good reason. But who can study these old manuscripts and rare books without sensing something new in the original intent and recognizing how different it often is from later interpretations? Who can read these documents without detecting the human encounter with the divine that is reflected in Smith's revelations in their historical setting? It is the original, fresh prophetic voice which is encountered in this work. This chapter outlines the history of the original texts. The details of this historical setting help explain how and why the texts were subsequently changed. The remainder of the chapters contain the texts themselves, with analysis of selected textual variants as warranted.

On April 6, 1830 at Manchester, New York, a revelation regarding Joseph Smith Jr., and the Church of Christ declared: "Wherefore meaning the Church thou shalt give heed unto all his [Joseph Smith's] words & commandments which he Shall give unto you as he receiveth them wa[l]king in all holyness [holiness] before me."¹ This emphasis in heeding Smith's words "as he receiveth them" underscores the importance of understanding their historical context and original import. Unfortunately, for the majority of the documents there appears to be no extant original manuscripts of the revelations as they were first recorded. However, we have the next best thing: handwritten copies and early printed editions. By examining these texts, one can often reconstruct the original wording.

Many of these documents were printed by William W. Phelps and Company in 1832 and 1833 in Independence, Missouri. They appeared in the Mormon periodical *The Evening and the Morning Star*. Before that, in July 1830, at Harmony, Pennsylvania, the revelations were arranged and copied with the assistance of John Whitmer.² As will be explained later Whitmer would record copies of the revelatory documents into a bound book.

In a revelation dictated at Fayette, New York, in September, Smith was likened to Moses in his prophetic primacy: "no one shall be appointed to Receive commandments & Revelations in this Church excepting my Servent Joseph for he Receiveth them even as Moses."³ In this same revelation Oliver Cowdery was called to "go unto the Lamanites & Preach my Gospel unto them & cause my Church to be established among them."⁴ A city called New Jerusalem was to be built

¹ BCR, 28; BC 22:4; LDS D&C 21:4; and RLDS D&C 19:2; subparagraph letters of RLDS D&C not included.

² See Manuscript History, Book A-1:50, written in 1839, CHL; Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith: Autobiographical and Historical Writings* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1989), 1:319; and Dan Vogel, ed., *Early Mormon Documents* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996), 1:127.

³ BCR, 40; BC 30:2; LDS D&C 28:2; RLDS D&C 27:2.

⁴ BCR, 41; BC 30:7; LDS D&C 28:8; RLDS D&C 27:3. "Lamanites" is a Book of Mormon term

"among the Lamanites." Later three others were called to accompany Cowdery. Oliver Cowdery himself stated that he was going "to rear up a pillar as a witness where the Temple of God shall be built, in the glorious New-Jerusalem."⁵

After correspondence from Cowdery, Smith received another revelation in March 1831 instructing church members to gather up their riches so they could purchase an inheritance to be designated later: "[I]t shall be called the New Jerusalem, a land of peace, a city of refuge, a place of safety for the saints of the most high God ... And it shall come to pass that the righteous shall be gathered out from among all nations, and shall come to Zion singing, with songs of everlasting joy."⁶

Another revelation in June, in Kirtland, Ohio, stated that W. W. Phelps, a recent convert but not yet baptized, should be "ordained to assist my servant Oliver [Cowdery] to do the work of Printing."⁷ In July the instructions were: "let my servant William ... be established as a Printer unto the Church ... And let my servant Oliver assist him even as I have commanded in Whatsoever place I shall appoint unto him to copy & to correct & select" the writings to be published.⁸ Land was to be purchased at Independence, Missouri, the new Zion, "for the house of the Printing."⁹

Prior to this time, circa March 1831, John Whitmer transcribed into a new record book copies of manuscript revelations Joseph Smith Jr. received. Whitmer served as a scribe for Joseph Smith in October 1830 as the book of Genesis was being revised and recorded. He was also the scribe after Smith put a stone in a hat and dictated a revelation for Orson Pratt in November.¹⁰ Both Whitmer and Smith wrote letters to the local Saints on August 28 and December 2.¹¹ John Whitmer reported in his Church history that before he left New York for Kirtland, Ohio: "The Lord manifested himself to Joseph the Revelator and gave commandment for me to go to the Ohio, and carry the commandments and revelations, with me, to comfort and strengthen my brethren in that land."¹² Sidney Rigdon wrote that with Whitmer "we send all the revelations which we have received."¹³ It was at Kirtland that John Whitmer was called as

for Native Americans.

⁵ Statement signed by Oliver Cowdery, October 17, 1830; see Ezra Booth to Rev. Ira Eddy, November 29, 1831, in the *Ohio Star* 2 (December 8, 1831):1, Ravenna, Ohio; quoted in Richard L. Anderson, "The Impact of the First Preaching in Ohio," *BYU Studies* 11 (Summer 1971):477.

⁶ BC 48:59, 67; also published in *Evening and the Morning Star* 1 (June 1832):2, Independence, Missouri; see LDS D&C 45:66, 71; RLDS D&C 45:12, 14.

⁷ BCR, 91; BC 57:5; LDS D&C 55:4; RLDS D&C 55:2.

⁸ BCR, 94; LDS D&C 57:11, 13; RLDS D&C 57:5.

⁹ BCR, 96; BC 59:49; LDS D&C 58:37; RLDS D&C 58:7.

¹⁰ James R. B. Vancleave to Joseph Smith III, September 29, 1878, "Miscellaneous Letters and Papers," Community of Christ Library-Archives (CCLA), The Temple, Independence, Missouri. That John Whitmer was the scribe see Orson Pratt in *Journal of Discourses* 7:311 (September 18, 1859) and 17:290 (February 7, 1875).

¹¹ See Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents* 1:13-15, 19-22.

¹² Book of John Whitmer Kept by Kept by Commad [Commandment], 10, original manuscript in CCLA. See Bruce N. Westergren, ed., *From Historian to Dissident: The Book of John Whitmer*. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1995), 13-14.

¹³ Rigdon, Letter of introduction sent with John Whitmer, circa January 4, 1831, as cited in E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unveiled* (Painesville [Ohio]: Printed and Published by the Author, 1834), 110-11.

church historian in March 1831.

It is not known how accurate John Whitmer's transcriptions are because many of the manuscripts from which he copied have not been located. But he did not always copy texts correctly. For example, the manuscript now known as Old Testament MS 3, contained variants when compared with the original manuscript, OT MS 1, he copied. One study states: "OT 3 differs from OT 1, from which Whitmer copied it, in many instances. On average, there are almost ten differences per page, divided almost evenly between changes that seem to be scribal errors and changes that seem to be deliberate editing on Whitmer's part. Near the end of the manuscript, the ratio of apparent transcription errors increases."¹⁴ A month after the arrival of Joseph Smith in Kirtland Whitmer was asked to occupy the position of Church historian. Whitmer summarized his call, "I was appointed by the voice of the Elders to keep the Church record. Joseph Smith Jr. said unto me You must also keep the Church history. I would rather not do it but observed that the will of the Lord be done, and if he desires it, I desire that he would manifest it through Joseph the Seer. And thus came the word of the Lord: Behold it is expedient in me that my servant John Whitmer should write and keep a regular history, and assist you my servant Joseph, in transcribing all things."¹⁵

Whitmer began transcribing revelations in his copy book. When recording the revelation to Orson Pratt (45-46) no background was given regarding the original writing of the document.¹⁶ As mentioned Whitmer worked as a scribe for Joseph Smith making a copy of some of Smith's Bible revision. By the end of August 1831 Whitmer had copied over ninety pages into the manuscript volume. It is possible that because non-Mormon newspapers were printing a few of Smith's revelations in April and September that it was considered best for the church to print the revelations that Smith had received since July 1828. Joseph Smith would send Oliver Cowdery to Independence, Missouri so he could assist W. W. Phelps in the Church newspaper assignment. In a series of conferences held in Hiram, Ohio it was decided to publish a selection of the revelations in a work titled A Book of Commandments.

Cowdery and Whitmer carried with them the manuscript book that was to be used as a basis for the proposed printed volume. In preparation for the Book of Commandments the month was added to copies of revelations in BCR. This would include revelations for Oliver Cowdery and during the time that he was a scribe for Joseph Smith. Except for the revelation of February 1829 (2), those messages of the period April to September 1830, had the name of the month added on some of the manuscript pages (12-14, 28-29, 32, 26). By the time the revelations were ready to be typeset all of the headings included the month.

The printed Book of Commandments includes two days added to the heading. The first one was for the six revelations of April 6, 1830 the date the Church was organized when Oliver Cowdery was present. The second date was September 4, 1830 relating to the sacrament of bread and wine.¹⁷ It was from the BCR that many revelations in full or extracted were printed in the *Evening and the Morning Star*. Sadly both projects were curtailed by a mob in July 1833 two years after the Independence area was declared to be the central gathering place and where the

¹⁴ See Kent P. Jackson and Scott H. Faulring, "Old Testament Manuscript 3: An Early Transcript of the Book of Moses," *Mormon Historical Studies* 5 (Fall 2004):116. Original in CCLA.

¹⁵ Book of John Whitmer, 24; Westergren, *From Historian to Dissident*, 55.

¹⁶ The "Book of Commandments & Revelations" (BCR) has the label "Commandment AD 1830" (45). The copied text contains no month only the year.

¹⁷ Chapter 28 of the Book of Commandments (page 60) was published earlier in the *Evening and the Morning Star* 1 (March 1833):6 [consecutive page number 78].

city New Jerusalem was to be built.

The plans for publishing were discussed during the first half of November 1831 in Hiram, Portage County, Ohio, in a series of Church conferences. Three of these conferences dealt with printing the revelations. On November 1 it was voted that 10,000 copies of the revelations should be published. As stated in the minutes: "br[other] Oliver Cowdery made a request desiring the mind of the Lord through this conference of Elders to know how many copies of the Book of commandments it was the will of the Lord should be published in the first edition of that work. Voted that there be ten thousand copies struck."¹⁸ The preface to the manuscript was then received which began: "Behold, this is mine authority & the authority of my servants & my preface unto the Book of my Commandments which I have given them to Publish unto you O Inhabitants of the Earth."¹⁹

In the afternoon "A number of the brethren arose and said that they were willing to testify to the world that they knew that they [the revelations] were of the Lord."²⁰ A revelation was received which said: "& now I the Lord give unto you a testimony of those commandments which are lying before you."²¹ The next day "the brethren then arose in turn and bore witness to the truth of the Book of Commandments."²² On November 3 Joseph Smith received a revelation designated as the "Appendix."²³ And at the November 8 meeting, it was "Resolved by this conference that Br[other] Joseph Smith Jr correct those errors or mistakes which he may discover by the holy Spirit while reviewing the revelations & commandments & also the fulness of the scriptures."²⁴

On November 12 it was made known with regard to Oliver Cowdery's trip to Independence, Missouri, that: "it is not wisdom in me, that he [Cowdery] should be intrusted [entrusted] with the commandments & the moneys which he shall carry unto the land of Zion, except one go with him, who will be true & faithfull; wherefore I the Lord willeth that my Servent John (Whitmer) Should go with my servent Oliver."²⁵ Subsequently Cowdery and Whitmer were commissioned: "Voted that Joseph Smith jr. be appointed to dedicate & consecrate these brethren & the sacred writings & all they have entrusted to their care, to the

¹⁸ "The Conference Minutes and Record Book of Christ's Church of Latter Day Saints" (known as the "Far West Record"), 15, manuscript in possession of LDS church. See Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *Far West Record: Minutes of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1830-1844* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 27.

¹⁹ BCR, 125; BC 1:2; LDS D&C 1:6; RLDS D&C 1:2.

²⁰ Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 27. David Whitmer wrote fifty-five years later that he objected to the printing of the revelations. See *An Address To All Believers in Christ* (Richmond, Missouri: author, 1887), 54-55. It appears that Whitmer went along with the consensus of the conference. Both Whitmer and William E. McLellin were present when the testimony to the revelations was given at the church conference. McLellin attached his name to the testimony. See copy in BCR, 121.

²¹ BCR, 115; LDS D&C 67:4; RLDS D&C 67:2.

²² Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 28. Cf. BCR, 121.

²³ "Having given, in a previous number, the Preface to the book of Commandments now in press, we give below the close, or as it has been called, the Appendix." *The Evening and the Morning Star* 1 (May 1833):1 [89].

²⁴ Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 29.

²⁵ BCR, 122; LDS D&C 69:1-2; RLDS D&C 69:1.

Lord: done accordingly."²⁶

On the same date Joseph Smith Jr., Martin Harris, Oliver Cowdery, John Whitmer, Sidney Rigdon, and William W. Phelps were made "stewards over the revelations & commandments which I have given unto them, & which I shall hereafter give unto them," to manage the publishing business and receive the benefits thereof.²⁷ Whitmer and Cowdery left Ohio on November 20 and arrived in Independence on January 5, 1832.²⁸ Cowdery wrote to Smith: "We expect soon to be ready to print and hope that brother Martin [Harris] can supply with paper."²⁹

"Shall we procure the paper required of our breatheren [brethren] in thus [their] letter and carry it with us or not and if we do what moneys shall we use for that purpose[?]" Smith asked God in Hiram, Ohio, on March 20, 1832. The answer was: "It is expedient saith the Lord unto you that the paper shall be purchased for the printing of the book of the Lord[']s commandments and it must needs be that you take it with [you] for it is not expedient that my servant Martin [Harris] should as yet go up unto the land of Zion[.] let the purchase be made by the Bishop of [if] it must needs be by hire[;] let whatsoever is done be done in the name of the Lord."³⁰ The next month Smith and counselors Jesse Gause and Sidney Rigdon traveled to Independence and brought paper with them for publishing *The Evening and the Morning Star* and the BC.

At a council of the Literary Firm on April 30, it was "Ordered by the Council that three thousand copies of the book of Commandments be printed the first edition." Phelps, Cowdery, and Whitmer were "appointed to review the Book of Commandments & select for printing such as shall be deemed by them proper, as dictated by the Spirit & make all necessary verbal corrections."³¹ Cowdery and Phelps are both listed in the minutes of the United Firm as "printer to the Church."³² Copies of revelations received since November 1831 were brought to Independence by the presidency of the High Priesthood. These included the vision of the three degrees of glory and a revelation to Gause as Smith's counselor, which were copied by Whitmer in the BCR.

The Evening and the Morning Star was published for the first time in June 1832. On the first page, under the title "Revelations," appeared "The Articles and Covenants of the Church of Christ." In the July issue Smith and Rigdon's "Vision" of the three degrees of glory was published. Each issue from June 1832 to July 1833 had either a complete revelation or a portion of a revelation, most of which were subsequently published in the BC.³³

The printing of "A Book of Commandments, for the Government of the Church of

²⁶ Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 32.

²⁷ BCR, 124; LDS D&C 70:3; RLDS D&C 70:1.

²⁸ Book of John Whitmer Kept by Commad [Commandment], 38; Westergren, *From Historian to Dissident*, 102.

²⁹ Oliver Cowdery to Joseph Smith, January 28, 1832, CHL. See Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 238.

³⁰ Manuscript in NKW.

³¹ Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 46.

³² *Ibid.*, 47.

³³ Peter Crawley, "A Bibliography of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in New York, Ohio, and Missouri," *BYU Studies* 12 (Summer 1972):477-78; also Affidavit of W. W. Phelps, September 28, 1832. On this same press, the *Upper Missouri Advertiser*, a weekly newspaper, was published.

Christ" (BC) commenced, but was a slow project.³⁴ Type was set on sheets of thirty-two pages each, sixteen pages per side, to be folded into signatures as follows:

Sheet A pages 1- 32	Title page and BC 1:1 to 12:5
Sheet B pages 33- 64	BC 12:5 to 29:40
Sheet C pages 65- 96	BC 29:40 to 45:6
Sheet D pages 97-128	BC 45:6 to 56:3
Sheet E pages 129-160	BC 56:4 to 65:47 ³⁵

On July 20, 1833 citizens of Jackson County, Missouri, met at the court house in Independence and formed a committee to ask the Mormons to shut down the printing office and leave the county.³⁶ When the latter proved unwilling to do so, the non-Mormon community voted to demolish the printing office. On Saturday, July 20, about 400 people went to the residence and printing house of W. W. Phelps and Company, threw the press from the upper-story, scattered the type, and destroyed most of the building.³⁷

The mob thus succeeded in stopping publication of the *Evening and the Morning Star*, the BC, and the *Upper Missouri Advertiser* (published weekly by Phelps). The last verse on sheet E of the BC read: "For verily I say that the rebellious are not of the blood of Ephraim."³⁸ The Mormons' press was later used when "Davis and Kelly" took it to Liberty, Missouri, to publish the *Upper Missouri Enquirer*.³⁹

Sheets of the unfinished BC were salvaged from the wreckage of the office. From these sheets a small number of copies of the book were assembled, though the five signatures (160 pages) represented only a portion of the anticipated final work.⁴⁰ The few copies thus assembled

³⁴ *The Evening and the Morning Star* 1 (December 1832):8 [56] and 1 (May 1833):1 [89]. On December 1, 1832 Joseph Smith recorded in his diary: "wrote and corrected revelations &c." Joseph Smith Journal, 3, CHL; in Dean C. Jessee, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Richard L. Jensen, eds., *Journals, Volume 1: 1832-1839*. Vol. 1 of the Journals series of *The Joseph Smith Papers* (Salt Lake City: Church Historian's Press, 2008), 1:10, cited hereafter as Jessee, *Journals, Volume 1*.

³⁵ John McDonnell to the Editor, *Saints Herald* 124 (December 1977):44.

³⁶ Warren A. Jennings, "Factors in the Destruction of the Mormon Press in Missouri, 1833," *Utah Historical Quarterly* 35 (Winter 1967):57-76.

³⁷ Petition dated September 28, 1833 in *The Evening and the Morning Star* (Kirtland, Ohio) 2 (December 1833):114; in *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1959), 1:412, cited hereafter as *History of the Church*; and *Times and Seasons* 1 (December 1839):18 in *History of the Church*, 1:390, footnote.

³⁸ BC 65:47 (page 160); also BCR, 111. The eight pages of the BCR in possession of the CCLA were obtained with the David Whitmer papers in 1903.

³⁹ Manuscript History, Book A-1:412, in *History of the Church*, 1:470.

⁴⁰ Peter Crawley and Chad J. Flake, *Notable Mormon Books 1830-1857* (Provo, Utah: Friends of the Brigham Young University Library, 1974), 6. See also Peter Crawley, "Joseph Smith and A Book of Commandments," *The Princeton University Library Chronicle* 42 (Autumn 1980):18-32.

were used by Church members in reading and studying Smith's revelations.⁴¹ Though the books had different title pages and bindings, they constituted "the first book printed in the immense territory between St. Louis and the Pacific coast."⁴²

By October 1833 plans were underway to get another press to publish the revelations at church headquarters in Kirtland. Frederick G. Williams wrote, "The book of commandments were nearly half finished at the time of the riot but were destroyed with the press and will probably be reprinted here as we have sent to New York for a press."⁴³ The BCR and Oliver Cowdery's BC, along with the Kirtland Revelations Book (KRB) were an invaluable primary source used in preparing the Doctrine and Covenants.

Besides the BCR, there are early manuscript copies of revelations in the papers of Newell K. Whitney, the "Bishop at Kirtland." These copies were written as early as 1831-32 and are among the earliest extant. It is possible that some of the Whitney manuscripts were the original texts for some of the revelations.⁴⁴

The KRB contains manuscript copies of revelations, as well. The book was begun in late 1832 with all but about twenty pages were recorded before August 18, 1834. For some of the revelations, this is the only manuscript known to exist. The texts were copied months or years after they were first received in the Kirtland Revelations Book; some of these revelations were additionally corrected at a later date in Smith's handwriting.⁴⁵

Other manuscripts, books, or journals that contain copies of Smith's revelations and were written by early church members include William E. McLellin's journal and manuscripts, from 1831-32; Zebedee Coltrin's journal containing two documents copied in Independence on January 12, 1832; the "Book of Commandments, Laws and Covenants" designated "Book A," made in 1832; "Book B" containing revelations copied by June 12, 1833; and "Book C" made in 1834.⁴⁶

The above works were evidently individual copies for personal use and not used for the 1835 D&C. The BCR and the KRB were the main manuscripts used for the forthcoming publication. The KRB contains some handwritten changes in the texts, was a church manuscript book and has notations that certain documents were to be included in the 1835 D&C.

For the period after the 1835 D&C was published, I have consulted the Joseph Smith journal for the years 1835-36 and the Scriptorium Book of Joseph Smith for 1838. "The Book of

⁴¹ Elden J. Watson, comp., *The Orson Pratt Journals* (Salt Lake City: comp., 1975), 38, entry for April 2, 1834; *The Evening and the Morning Star* (Kirtland, Ohio) 2 (August 1834): 184, an Appeal dated July 1834; also Lectures on Theology, "Lecture Third," 1835 D&C, 36, 42. See also John Whitmer's Account Book, CHL.

⁴² "Missouri History Not Found in Textbooks," *Missouri Historical Review* 44 (October 1949): 94; extract from the *Kansas City Star*, July 1, 1949, by John Edward Hicks.

⁴³ Williams to John Murdock, Kirtland, Ohio, October 10, 1833, Joseph Smith Letterbook 1:62, CHL.

⁴⁴ Chad J. Flake, "The Newell K. Whitney Collection," *BYU Studies* 11 (Summer 1971):325.

⁴⁵ Frederick G. Williams [III], "Frederick Granger Williams of the First Presidency of the Church," *BYU Studies* 12 (Spring 1972):250n21. At the end of the revelation of August 29, 1832, it is stated: "by Joseph the seer and writ[t]en by F, G, Williams Scribe." Most of the copies of revelations up to March 15, 1833 are in Frederick G. Williams's handwriting.

⁴⁶ Earl E. Olson, "The Chronology of the Ohio Revelations," *BYU Studies* 11 (Summer 1971):332-35. See also Robert J. Woodford, "The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants," Ph.D. diss., Brigham Young University, 1974, 98-106.

the Law of the Lord," 1841-42, contains revelatory documents as well. The sources (and their locations) used in this book are identified in the following table:

Textual Sources Used in This Study

LDS Church History Library

- "A Book of Commandments & Revelations" (BCR)
- "Kirtland Revelations" Book (KRB)
- A Book of Commandments (1833)
- "Book of Commandments, Law and Covenants, Book B"
- "Book of Commandments, Law and Covenants, Book C"
- Zebedee Coltrin Journal
- William E. McLellin Journal
- William E. McLellin Collection
- Manuscript revelations
- William W. Phelps Journal
- Scriptory Book of Joseph Smith
- Joseph Smith 1835-36 Journal
- Joseph Smith Letterbook 1
- Frederick G. Williams Papers
- Book of the Law of the Lord
- Record of the Council of Fifty or Kingdom of God

L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University
Newel K. Whitney Collection

Community of Christ Library-Archives

- Book of Commandments manuscript pages (originally in BCR)
- Manuscript letter to John E. Page

With the destruction of the church's press in Independence, a council of the United Firm met in Kirtland on September 11, 1833. Frederick G. Williams, Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, and Newel K. Whitney, along with Oliver Cowdery (who was a "delegate to represent the residue of the said firm in Independence") conceived two publications to be printed by Williams. These were to be titled "The Latter-day Saints Messenger and Advocate" and "the Star formerly published in Jackson County, Missouri." Cowdery was designated the editor of both. The expectation was that publication would eventually be transferred back to Independence.⁴⁷

On April 19, 1834 in the "wilderness" at Norton, Ohio, Cowdery and Rigdon were commissioned to assist each other "in arranging the church covenants which are to be soon published."⁴⁸ A conference of elders would be held at Norton two days later. Soon afterwards a revelation dated April 23, 1834 called the United Firm's Kirtland printing office under Williams

⁴⁷ Kirtland Council Minute Book [December 3, 1832 - November 27, 1837], CHL, typescript, 24.; see also Manuscript History, Book A-1:345; *History of the Church*, 1:409; Lyndon W. Cook, *The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Provo, Utah: Seventy's Mission Bookstore, 1981), 114-15.

⁴⁸ Joseph Smith Journal, 76-79, handwriting of Oliver Cowdery; Jessee et al., *Journals, Volume 1*:41. See also Manuscript History, Book A-1:460; and *History of the Church*, 2:50-51.

and Cowdery to print "the revelations which I have given unto you, & which I shall hereafter, from time to time, give unto you."⁴⁹ Also they were instructed to secure copyrights, "that others may not take the blessings away from you which I have confer[r]ed upon you."⁵⁰

At a high council meeting held on September 24:

The council then proceeded to appoint a committee to arrange the items of the doctrine of Jesus Christ for the government of the church of Latter-Day Saints which church was organized and commenced its rise on the 6th of April 1830. These items are to be taken from the Bible, book of mormon, and the revelations which have been given to the church up to this date or shall be, until such arrangement is made. Brother Samuel H. Smith then nominated brothers Joseph Smith Junr[,] Oliver Cowdery[,] Sidney Rigdon and Frederick G. Williams to compose said committee which was seconded by brother Hyrum Smith. The Counselors then gave their vote which was also agreed to by the whole conference. The council then decided that said committee, after arranging and publishing said book of covenants, have the avails [royalties] of the same.⁵¹

The council thus sustained Cowdery and Rigdon who had been appointed four months previously at Norton.

In the September 1834 issue of the *Evening and the Morning Star*—printed in Kirtland—a "Prospectus for Re-printing the First and Second Volumes of The Evening and the Morning Star" appeared. According to the editor, the twenty-four numbers were to be reprinted with typographical corrections: "There are many typographical errors in both volumes, and especially in the last, which we shall endeavor carefully to correct, as well as principle, if we discover any.-It is also proper for us to say, that in the first 14 numbers, in the Revelations, are many errors, typographical, and others, occasioned by transcribing manuscript; but as we shall have access to originals, we shall endeavor to make proper corrections."⁵²

Whether or not this was Cowdery's initial intent, careful study shows that if any original manuscripts (previous to 1835) were used, their exact wording was not adhered to. *The Evening and the Morning Star*, reprinted in Kirtland between January and June 1835 under the title *Evening and Morning Star*, altered the texts, deleted previously published material, and inserted editorial comments by Cowdery.

For instance, in the January 1835 reissue for June 1832, the following remarks concerning Smith's revelations were added:

On the revelations we merely say, that we were not a little surprised to find the previous print so different from the original. We have given them a careful

⁴⁹ "Book of Commandments, Law and Covenants; Book C," CHL; LDS D&C 104:58; RLDS D&C 101:10. Compare LDS D&C 104:58 with LDS D&C 70:3; RLDS D&C 70:1.

⁵⁰ "Book of Commandments, Law and Covenants; Book C." See also KRB, 105; BCR, 196, CHL. The copyright wording was not included in the 1835 D&C after 98:10.

⁵¹ Kirtland Council Minute Book, 76. See also Manuscript History, Book B-1:556-57; *History of the Church*, 2:165.

⁵² Prospectus dated Kirtland, Ohio, September 26, 1834, in *The Evening and the Morning Star* 2 (September 1834):192. The prospectus was dated two days after the September 24, 1834 high council meeting.

comparison, assisted by individuals whose known integrity and ability is uncensurable. Thus saying we cast no reflections upon those who were entrusted with the responsibility of publishing them in Missouri, as our own labors were included in that important service to the church, and it was our unceasing endeavor to have them correspond with the copy furnished us. We believe they are now correct. If not in every word, at least in principle. For the special good of the church we have also added a few items from other revelations.⁵³

On February 4, 1835 Cowdery wrote to Bishop Newel K. Whitney requesting the original manuscript known as the Law of the Church:

Bishop Whitney:

Will you have the kindness to send us, by the bearer, the original copy of the Revelation given 12 elders Feb. 1831 called "The Law of the Church"? We are preparing the old Star for re-printing, and have no copy from which to correct, and kno[w] of no other beside yours.

Your Ob't Serv't.

Kirtland, Feb. 4, 1835. Oliver Cowdery.⁵⁴

It is not known if Cowdery received the original from Whitney. But the revised, expanded text contained material anachronistic to the original 1831 setting. Cowdery wrote in the March reprint: "Those who read this paper will see that it contains items of covenant of deep interest to the church of the saints, and as they have frequently been ridiculed in consequence of certain items contained in the one setting forth their faith on the subject of bestowing temporal gifts for the benefit of the poor, it is a matter of joy to us to be able to present this document according to the original."⁵⁵ Cowdery's statement that he was presenting the February 9, 1831 revelation, "according to the original," makes sense only if by "original" he meant another manuscript of that revelation prepared for the forthcoming D&C. The changes in many of the revelations reflected later theology, modifications in church government, recognition of former discrepancies, and sensitivity to criticism engendered by the originals.

In reconstructing the events of 1835, it may be helpful to know something about the key players, specifically members of the First Presidency. Joseph Smith Jr., was the prophet through whom the revelations came, and most of the D&C, whether revelations or other documents, is believed to have been originally dictated by him. His own handwriting appears in the entry of a December 4, 1831 revelation copied into the KRB. He blessed Sidney Rigdon and Oliver Cowdery for their work in arranging the revelations and was the presiding officer both of the Kirtland High Council and of the Church.

Sidney Rigdon assembled seven Lectures on Faith for use in the elders' school during the winter of 1834-35. These were "delivered before a Theological class" in Kirtland.⁵⁶ In January

⁵³ *Evening and Morning Star* (Kirtland reprint) 1 (June 1832):16, reprinted January 1835.

⁵⁴ Manuscript in NKW. See photo of letter in Chad J. Flake, "The Newell K. Whitney Collection," *BYU Studies* 11 (Summer 1971):325.

⁵⁵ *Evening and Morning Star* (Kirtland reprint) 1 (August 1832):48, reprinted March 1835.

⁵⁶ Alan J. Phipps, "The Lectures on Faith: An Authorship Study" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1977); Leland H. Gentry, "What of the Lectures on Faith," *BYU Studies* 19 (Fall 1978): 5-19; and Noel B. Reynolds, "The Case for Sidney Rigdon as Author of the *Lectures on*

1835 Smith, according to the Manuscript History, helped "in preparing the Lectures on Theology for publication in the Book of Doctrine and covenants, which the committee[,] appointed last September[,] were now compiling."⁵⁷ The preface to the 1835 D&C, drafted by the committee, said: "The first part of the book will be found to contain a series of Lectures as delivered before a Theological class in this place, and in consequence of their embracing the important doctrine of salvation, we have arranged them into the following work."⁵⁸

Cowdery had been a close associate of Smith since April 1829 and a number of early revelations are in his handwriting. Though he was not in Ohio when many of the revelations were originally given, he copied a few of them into the BCR and KRB. He was set apart in April 1834 to assist Rigdon in compiling the book of covenants and was publicly selected for the committee on September 24. On December 5, 1834 he was ordained an assistant president to Smith and thus became a member of the First Presidency. As a member of the D&C committee, his name appears on the preface to the 1835 edition. He edited the newspapers at Kirtland, including the *Messenger and Advocate*, until June 1835. At this time he relinquished the paper to Church historian John Whitmer. Cowdery also edited the reprint of the *Evening and Morning Star* and, in February 1835, the short-lived community-oriented *Northern Times*. As one of the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon, he helped select the first Twelve Apostles of the Church. In addition, he served on the Kirtland High Council.

Sidney Rigdon was a noted religious personality in his own right before joining with the Mormons. He became closely associated with Joseph Smith soon after they first met in December 1830; by March 1832 he had become a counselor to Smith. Since he was one of Smith's scribes, his handwriting appears in early drafts. Along with Cowdery, he was set apart to assist in compiling the book of covenants. He worked on the Lectures on Faith, wrote theological articles for Church publications, and, as a member of the First Presidency, attended Kirtland High Council meetings.

Frederick G. Williams was a scribe whose work started in July 1832 at a time when Rigdon for a short period was out of harmony with the Church. In the winter of 1832-33, Williams was made a counselor to Smith. Most of the KRB is in his handwriting. As a member of the First Presidency, he was also involved in Kirtland High Council meetings.

Although not a member of the revision committee, William W. Phelps, former editor of the *Evening and the Morning Star*, came to Kirtland in mid-May 1835 "and assisted the Committee in compiling the Book of Doctrine and Covenants."⁵⁹ The next month he copied revelations into his diary and compared documents for the D&C. With his experience in operating a press, he also worked at the printing office on the D&C and the *Northern Times*.

As members of the First Presidency of the Church, and especially as members of the committee in whose charge the revelations were placed, these men were responsible for the 1835 publication. A preface prepared by this committee guaranteed that as presiding elders they had "carefully selected" and "compiled" the *Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of the Latter Day Saints*. The copyright was obtained on January 14, 1835.⁶⁰

Faith," *Journal of Mormon History* 32 (Fall 2005):1-41. See also Richard S. Van Wagoner, Steven C. Walker, and Allen D. Roberts, "'The Lectures on Faith': A Case Study in Decanonization," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 20 (Fall 1987):71-77.

⁵⁷ Manuscript History, Book B-1:563, written in 1843, CHL; *History of the Church*, 2:180.

⁵⁸ 1835 D&C, [iii].

⁵⁹ Manuscript History, Book B-1:592; *History of the Church*, 2:227.

⁶⁰ Woodford, "The Historical Development of the Doctrine and Covenants," 48.

To recap there were corrections made to the transcriptions that John Whitmer made of the revelations in the BCR. This included grammatical and other textual revisions in some of the revelatory documents for the *Evening and the Morning Star* and Book of Commandments. Some revelations had no redactions. Not all wording added to Whitmer's text was followed when typesetting. Most notable were the corrections made by Sidney Rigdon but not followed in either publication.

In addition when W. W. Phelps and John Whitmer arrived at Kirtland in May 1835 they brought with them the BCR. Now in preparation for the Doctrine and Covenants more modifications were made in the BCR for the forthcoming publication. So there were two manuscript volumes used for certain documents as they were typesetting the 1835 D&C.

An interesting observation mentioned in the Doctrine and Covenants is that the second part (covenants and commandments) were for the "regulation of the church." These items in this section of the book were to be the Latter Day Saints "articles of religious faith" (Preface to 1835 D&C). Background information to the text of the sections is scarce. For instance, only six documents include the day of the month. For locations, mention was made of Fayette and Manchester, New York and Harmony, Pennsylvania (once each); Kirtland, Ohio (six times); Zion [Missouri] (once); and Perrysburgh, New York (once). No other locations were included.

Oliver Cowdery's printed Book of Commandments⁶¹ was used in preparing the 1835 D&C. Some locations have been crossed through indicating they were not to be included in typesetting. For those revelations received in New York only one section was printed with the date of April 6, 1830 (BC 22; 1835 D&C 46; LDS D&C 21). For this revelation the state of New York is crossed through while Manchester is not. The 1835 D&C omitted both. For example, three sections in a row include the locations of Zion and Kirtland.⁶²

On August 17 a general assembly was called in Kirtland. The term "general assembly" usually meant a gathering "of the several [priesthood] quorums which constitute the spiritual authorities of the church."⁶³ But in this meeting all members, both male and female, were invited to vote. One of the purposes was to determine if the Doctrine and Covenants then in press would be approved.

The minutes are recorded in the Kirtland Council Minute Book, and a printed version was published in the August 1835 issue of the *Messenger and Advocate*, with an abbreviated version in the 1835 D&C. Errors in the minutes were noticed too late to be corrected as they "escaped the eye of the proof reader" and were placed at the end of the book (xxv) as "Notes to the Reader."⁶⁴ The Kirtland Council Minute Book contains the following:

Convened in Kirtland August 17th A.D. 1835 by the presidency of the Church of the Latter-Day Saints, for the purpose of Examining a book of commandments and covenants which has been compiled and written. ... This committee having

⁶¹ Located in CHL. Similar markings in Cowdery's BC appear in BCR and KRB.

⁶² 1835 D&C 19, 20, 21; LDS D&C 59, 63, 64.

⁶³ 1835 D&C 3:11, (April [28-30] 1835); LDS D&C 107:32; RLDS D&C 104:11.

⁶⁴ The minutes were deleted from the 1844 Nauvoo edition of the D&C. The assembly minutes were first printed in RLDS D&C in the 1894 edition. In the 1911 RLDS edition, the minutes were numbered section "108A," and in the 1970 RLDS D&C they were moved to the Introduction (9-12). They were subsequently removed and are not included in the 1990 RLDS edition.

finished said Book according to the instructions given them, it was deemed necessary to call the general assembly of the Church to see whether the book be approved or not by the Authoroties [Authorities] of the church, that it may, if approved, become a law unto the church, and a rule of faith and practice unto the same.⁶⁵

The presiding officers, Cowdery and Rigdon, were of course members of the committee that had prepared the D&C. Smith and Williams were in Michigan, and all of the newly ordained apostles were absent on a mission.⁶⁶ Max H. Parkin has written: "Some elders were dispatched on short-term tours of only a few weeks while others were sent out for longer durations."⁶⁷ Whereas the *History of the Church* manuscript describes the Michigan trip as a "mission" (Manuscript History, Book B-1:606), the printed version (2:253) changes the word "mission" to "visit." Why such an important meeting did not occur previous to Smith's and Williams's departure is not known. Cowdery and Rigdon "proceeded to organize the whole assembly," including at least 118 priesthood members, into their respective quorums and non-priesthood groups.

Since not all twelve members of the Kirtland High Council could attend the assembly, eight substitutes stood in their place. In the Missouri High Council, as well, there were only three regular members present; four had been appointed apostles. Thus nine other priesthood holders served as substitutes for the Missouri council for the General Assembly. The seven presidents of the Seventy were represented by four regular members with three substitutes to fill this quorum. The bishop of Kirtland was present with his two counselors. Edward Partridge, bishop from Zion, was absent, but his position was represented by John Corrill. Other substitutes filled in for absentees among the elders, priests, teachers, and deacons presidencies.

In the morning session, ordinations and blessings took place. In the afternoon there was a vote on the D&C. President Cowdery "in behalf of the committee"⁶⁸ "arose with the Book of Doctrine and Covenants (284 pages) contain[ing] the faith[,] articles and covenants of the Latter Day Saints."⁶⁹ President Rigdon then "explained the manner by which they intended to obtain the voice of the assembly for or against said book."⁷⁰ William W. Phelps commented on the book and said "he had examined it carefully, that it was well arranged and calculated to govern the church in righteousness, [and] if followed would bring the members to see eye to eye. And further that he had received the testimony from God, that the Revelations and commandments contained therein are true ..." John Whitmer testified "that he was well acquainted with the work

⁶⁵ Kirtland Council Minute Book, 98.

⁶⁶ The Manuscript History for the August 17, 1835 General Assembly stated that Smith and Williams were "absent on a visit to the Saints in Michigan." The words "Joseph absent" are in the side margin. Manuscript History, Book B-1:600; see also *History of the Church*, 2:243.

⁶⁷ "Conflict at Kirtland: A Study of the Nature and Causes of External and Internal Conflict of the Mormons in Ohio between 1830 and 1838," Salt Lake City: author, 1966, 142.

⁶⁸ *Latter Day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 1 (August 1835):161, Kirtland, Ohio.

⁶⁹ Kirtland Council Minute Book, 103. This 284-page book included articles on "Marriage" and "Of Governments and Laws in General," minutes of the General Assembly, Index, Contents, and Notes to the Reader.

⁷⁰ *Messenger and Advocate* 1 (August 1835):161.

& knew it to be true and from God."⁷¹ John Smith, "taking the lead of the high council in Kirtland," stated "that the lectures were judiciously arranged and compiled, and were profitable for doctrine."⁷²

Voting took place as John Smith presented the following: "That they would receive the Book as the rule of their [their] faith & practice and put themselves under the guidance of the same and also that they were satisfied with the committee that were chosen to compile it, as having discharged their duty faithfully." Levi Jackman "said that he had examined as many of the revelations contained in the book as were printed in Zion, & firmly believes them as he does the Book of Mormon or the Bible and also the whole contents of the Book." Neither set of minutes stated that Jackman actually compared the new document with the BC or any other record. The First Presidency and two high councils voted in favor of the book and the committee.

Phelps again arose and "read the written testimony of the Twelve Apostles in favor of the Book and the Committee who compiled it."⁷³ Other leaders stated, as they passed the book to each other, that they knew the book was true and were satisfied with it and the committee that compiled it. Votes of the different priesthood quorums were taken, all in the affirmative. Thomas Gates "took the book and expressed his satisfaction with it, and also called a vote of all the members present, both male & female, & They gave a decided voice in favor of it & also of the committee."⁷⁴ The *Messenger and Advocate* minutes stated: "The several authorities, and the general assembly, by a unanimous vote accepted of the labors of the committee."⁷⁵

After this vote of confidence, Phelps read an article on marriage. It was voted upon and accepted. Cowdery then read an article on governments and laws in general. This was accepted as well. Both articles were "ordered to be printed in said book, by a unanimous vote."⁷⁶ After a hymn and prayer, the assembly was dismissed by Rigdon, having accepted the book as a whole but not having voted on the individual revelatory documents. Don H. Compier commented about this manner of canonizing the D&C:

It was the work of the committee--not the specific content of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants--that was considered by the quorums of the church on August 17, 1835. Their unanimous acceptance of the book that had not yet been published was in effect a decision to include the forthcoming publication in the church's canon of scripture. It is interesting to note that their action thus "canonized" not only Smith's revelations (selected and worded as he chose) but also non-revelatory material, namely the "Lectures on Faith" and the articles on government and marriage.⁷⁷

The following accounts reflect the attitudes of the people present at the General Assembly. Ira Ames wrote twenty-three years later: "I was present at a General Assembly of the Church on the 17th August 1835 to accept the Book of Doctrine & Covenants as our rule of

⁷¹ Kirtland Council Minute Book, 103.

⁷² *Messenger and Advocate* 1 (August 1835): 161.

⁷³ Kirtland Council Minute Book, 104.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁷⁵ *Messenger and Advocate* 1 (August 1835):162.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 162-63.

⁷⁷ "Canonization in the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints," *Restoration Studies III* (Independence, Missouri: Herald Publishing House, 1986), 179.

faith. And gave my vote as president of the Priests Quorum. See D&C page 257 1st Edition."⁷⁸ Ebenezer Robinson, who worked in the printing office after his arrival in Kirtland in May 1835 (though was not a member of the church until October), recorded fifty-three years later:

On the 17th day of August, 1835, a general assembly of the church convened in the lower part of the temple, to hear the report of the compiling committee of said book, and determine, by vote, whether they "accepted and acknowledged it as the doctrine and covenants of their faith.["

After the only two members of the committee, who were present, viz: Oliver Cowdery and Sidney Rigdon, had reported, several official members of the church, Presidents of quorums, arose, one after another, and testified to the truth of the book, and they and their quorums "accepted and acknowledged it as the doctrine and covenants of their faith." Afterwards the question was put to the whole assembly and carried, unanimously.

We attended that meeting, and noticed that a majority of those voting did so upon the testimony of those who bore record to the truth of the book, as they had neither time or opportunity to examine it for themselves. They had no means of knowing whether any alterations had been made in any of the revelations or not.

Neither Joseph Smith jr. [n]or Frederick G. Williams, were present at this general assembly, as they had gone to Michigan.⁷⁹

In September 1835 copies of the book arrived from the binder in Cleveland. William W. Phelps wrote: "We got some of the Commandments from Cleveland last week."⁸⁰ Wilford Woodruff received a copy on September 23, 1835 "as A Present from O[liver] Cowdery."⁸¹

There is no indication that anyone realized that the texts of some of the revelations had been revised, deleted, or enlarged. The revelations were accepted in their altered form without comment, apparently in the belief that they were identical to those originally given to the Saints. There was no explanation made by the committee, either in the preface or within the text of the revelations, as to why alterations had been made. Based on Cowdery's editorial comments, it seems that revelatory texts differing from those that had been previously published were changed without regard for earlier documents.

Seven years later Smith read proof sheets with Phelps in Nauvoo, Illinois, for a new edition of the D&C.⁸² In September 1844, two months after Smith's murder, the second edition was referenced in the *Times and Seasons* showing that it was available by that time.⁸³ This

⁷⁸ "Journal and Record of the Life & Family of Ira Ames," microfilm A-311, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City; original in CHL.

⁷⁹ Ebenezer Robinson, ed., "Items of Personal History of the Editor," *The Return* 1 (June 1889):88-89, Davis City, Iowa.

⁸⁰ Phelps to Sally Phelps, September 16, 1835; as cited in Bruce A. Van Orden, ed., "Writing to Zion: The William W. Phelps Kirtland Letters (1835-1836)," *BYU Studies* 33 (1993):566.

⁸¹ Scott G. Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, typescript, 1833-1898, 9 vols., 1983-85, (Midvale, UT: Signature Books) 1:43; original in CHL.

⁸² Joseph Smith Journal, Kept by Willard Richards, entry of February 14, 1843, CHL. See *History of the Church*, 5:273.

⁸³ *Times and Seasons* 5 (September 2, 1844):636. The 1844 edition was printed in Nauvoo,

edition had eight additional sections, including two pre-1835 revelations; God's word to Smith in 1837, 1838, and 1841; two letters of 1842; and a testimonial regarding the martyrdom of the prophet and his brother Hyrum on June 27, 1844.

In early histories of the church, the primary source of Smith's revelations was the 1835 D&C. More recently, the two major Latter-day Saint churches have published their own retrospectively updated editions of the D&C and based their histories on these publications.

It is a well-established canon of textual criticism that in order to uncover the original text one must follow the earliest and best manuscripts available.⁸⁴ In biblical textual criticism, the text critic works with versions from various scribes in attempting to determine which reading is closest to the original. Among the most significant conventions are assumptions that the shortest reading is probably closest to the original, since a scribe more often adds than takes away, and that the most difficult reading is probably nearest to the original wherever this rule can reasonably be applied. The possibility of transcription errors such as dittography must be kept in mind, as well.

In applying these principles to the revelations given by Joseph Smith, we must apply two distinctly different approaches to the texts themselves. The first involves comparing the various versions of the printed texts. Instead of peeling back layers of scribal variations, as one would do with biblical texts in an attempt to restore the original, the critic here peels back various layers of editing in an attempt to restore the original text of the revelation. The second approach is much like biblical text criticism. It involves examining the various extant scribal manuscripts of Joseph Smith's revelations and comparing them in an attempt to uncover the text of the revelation as Smith originally received it. Applying these principles to Smith's revelations allows us to re-establish the original text and to better understand the revelations in the context in which they were originally given.

The history of the Mormon church, in a passage compiled in 1839, recalled a time in the summer of 1830 when Oliver Cowdery suggested a change in the Articles and Covenants of the Church. Joseph Smith replied, asking Cowdery: "by what authority he [Cowdery] took upon him to command me [Smith] to alter, or erase, to add or diminish to or from a revelation or commandment from Almighty God."⁸⁵ Yet it appears that for the 1835 D&C, Smith and Cowdery were both involved in this sort of editing.

On July 31, 1832 Smith wrote a letter to William W. Phelps concerning copies of the commandments and of the vision of three degrees of glory. Smith wrote: "I will send them to you as soon as possible [possible], but I will exhort you to be careful not to alter the sense of any of them for he that adds or diminishes to the prop[h]ecies must come under the condemnation writ[t]en therein."⁸⁶ Indeed, this understanding of the unalterable nature of the revelatory text is

Church headquarters.

⁸⁴ For text critical methods, see Kurt and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament, An Introduction to the Critical Edition and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans/E.J. Brill, 1987); Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament, Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); and Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart, Ger.: German Bible Society, 1994).

⁸⁵ Manuscript History, Book A-1:51. See Jessee, *Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:260, 320. See also *Times and Seasons* 4 (February 15, 1843):108, and *History of the Church*, 1:105.

⁸⁶ Copy of letter of Smith to Phelps, July 31, 1832, CHL. See Dean C. Jessee, ed., *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co. and Provo, Utah: Brigham Young

found in the BC. There it says concerning lost Book of Mormon manuscript pages: "I will confound those who have altered my words."⁸⁷

But it appears that Joseph Smith believed there was no harm in modifying and revising his revelations since they were not the actual words of Deity. The changes made by Joseph Smith for the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants are textual changes in a previous recorded document received at a different date and location. They are not the text of another revelation received at a later time.

In recent years there has been a growing willingness on the part of some writers to admit the existence of variant readings of the early revelations.⁸⁸ Part of this openness responds to the criticisms of some early rank-and-file members who harbored grievances against church leaders, including charges of textual revision. Warren Parrish, a one-time scribe and confidant of Joseph Smith, wrote on March 13, 1838:

On comparing the first and second edition of the book of covenants, which Smith claims to have received by direct revelation from heaven, there is a wide difference; whole sentences altered; language and meaning essentially different, which shows that they have no confidence in themselves. Any man that would add to or diminish from John's revelations, God said, should be cursed; has the Lord given Joseph more liberty than he did his beloved disciple?⁸⁹

William Harris, another former church member, published a book in 1841, *Mormonism Portrayed*, in which he addressed textual changes: "Let me digress for one moment, and ask why this alteration? It does appear to have been done by command of God, but purports to be the same revelation as was first published."⁹⁰

This important point has both historical and theological ramifications. Jonathan B. Turner in his 1842 book also dealt with changes in the 1835 D&C:

It would have been well for the world if Smith's divinity, instead of giving him a pair of stone spectacles, had given him a divine printer, and a divine press, and such types that he might have been enabled to fix the meaning of his inspired revelations, so that it would be possible to let them stand, at *least two years*,

University Press, 2002), 273. The vision of three glories was published in the July 1832 issue of *The Evening and the Morning Star*, as Phelps already possessed a copy.

⁸⁷ BC 9:10; LDS D&C 10:42; RLDS D&C 3:9.

⁸⁸ See, for example, Robert J. Woodford, "How the Revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants Were Received and Compiled," *Ensign* 15 (January 1985):27-33; Melvin J. Petersen, "Preparing Early Revelations for Publication," *ibid.*, 15 (February 1985):14-20; Marlin K. Jensen, "The Joseph Smith Papers: The Manuscript Revelation Books," *Ibid.*, 39 (July 2009):47-51; Gerrit Dirkmat, "Great and Marvelous are the Revelations of God," *ibid.*, 43 (January 2013):45-49; Robert J. Woodford, "Introducing A Book of Commandments and Revelations, A Major New Documentary 'Discovery,'" *BYU Studies* 48, no. 3 (2009):7-17; and Grant Underwood, "Revelation, Text, and Revision: Insight from the Book of Commandments and Revelations," *ibid.*, 67-84.

⁸⁹ "Mormonism," *Waldo Patriot* 1 (May 4, 1838):1, Belfast, Maine.

⁹⁰ William Harris, *Mormonism Portrayed* (Warsaw, IL: Sharp & Gamble, Publishers, 1841), 29. Thomas C. Sharp helped prepare this work for publication.

without abstracting, interpolating, altering, or garbling, to suit the times. But the ways of Smith's providence are indeed mysterious. We will not pretend to judge.⁹¹

Turner further declared: "The revelations in the Book of Covenants cannot be understood without carefully comparing them with the history and position of the Mormon church at the time they were given."⁹²

As far as is known, Joseph Smith made no response to these specific charges. He did state in Nauvoo that "there is no error in the revelations which I have taught."⁹³ It is not certain if he meant by this the original text, the 1835 revisions, or his teachings about the revelations. In any event, the earliest text is preferred over the revised 1835 text for clarity and historical consistency, and the earliest revelatory text is best understood when used in conjunction with contemporary letters and journals of the persons involved.

⁹¹J[onathan]. B. Turner, *Mormonism in All Ages: or the Rise, Progress, and Causes of Mormonism* (New York: Published by Platt and Peters, 1842), 226, emphasis in original. Another early writer on Mormonism, Englishman Henry Caswall, closely followed Turner's account in his book *The Prophet of the Nineteenth Century; or, the Rise, Progress, and Present State of the Mormons, or Latter-Day Saints* (London: Printed for J.G.F. and J. Rivington, 1843), 79-80.

⁹² Turner, *Mormonism in All Ages*, 244.

⁹³ Report by Thomas Bullock of a discourse delivered on May 12, 1844, in Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980), 369.